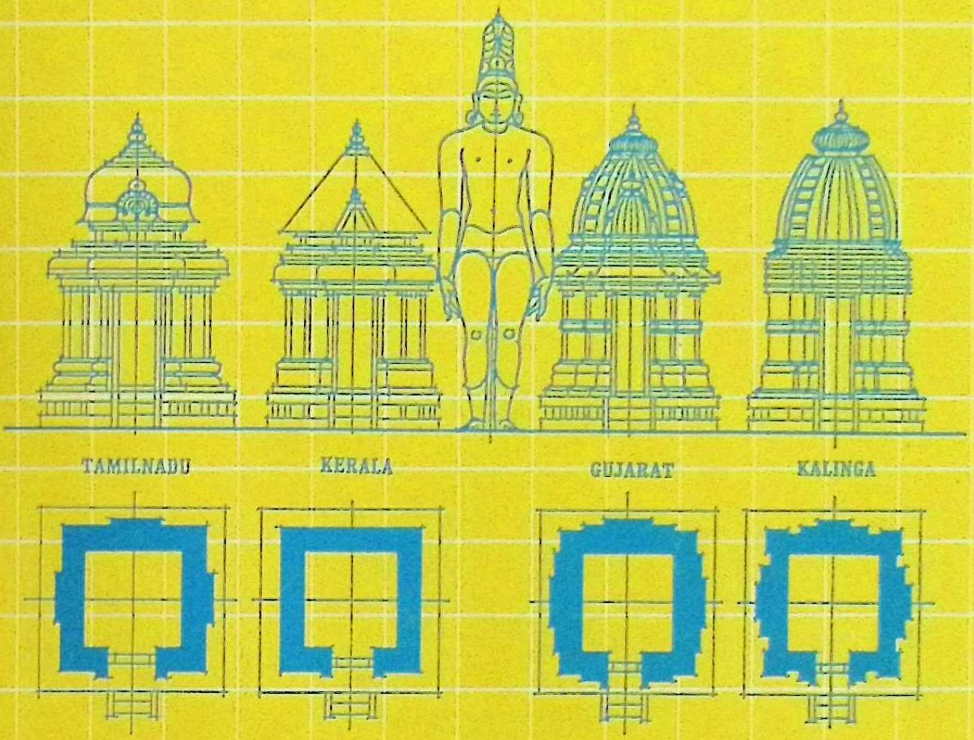
What is a Temple?

TEMPLE BUILDING IS A FORM OF GOD

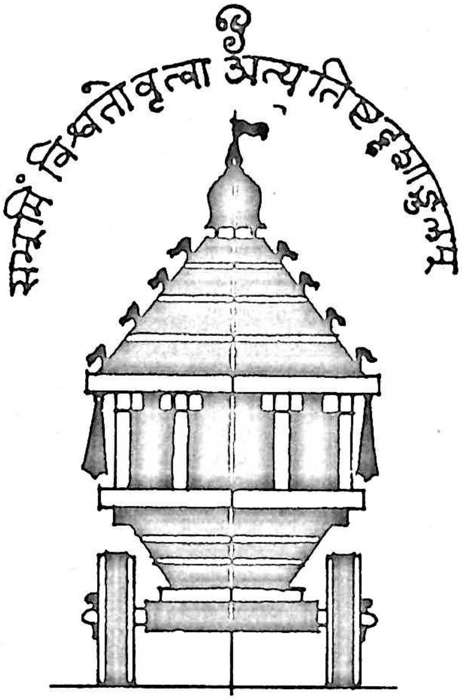


Pan-indianness of temple concept and form

TEMPLE AS HUMAN FORM

Dr.V.Ganapati Sthapati

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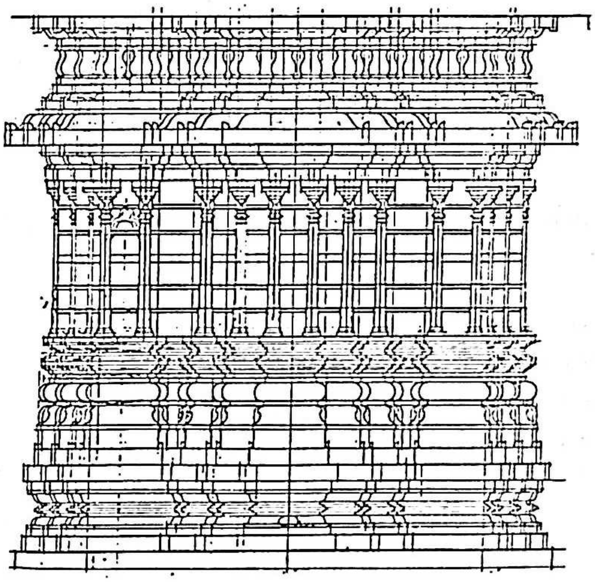
He envelopes the earth from all sides and is
of Ten angula height as well

காலக்கூறே கணக்கியலாகி

Dedicated to

Her Holiness Ammai Madiyoli Saraswati

on the occasion of the consecration of the Main Sanctum, the Garbhagriha of Sri Krishna on 01.02.98, at 117, Dr.Renga Road, Mylapore, Chennai-4.



Details of the Garbhagriha structure as executed in hard granite

Designed and Executed by **'V.Ganapati Sthapati and Associates'**, Chennai.

Quotes brought into focus

प्रासादं पुरुषं मत्वा पूजयेत् मन्त्रवित्तमः
"Prāsādam purusham mathvā pujayet mantra vittamaha".

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तो जीवो देवः सनातनः
"Deho devālayah prokto jeevo devah sanātanaha".

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेवच।
"Ātmānam rathinam viddhi sarīram rathamevacha".

Temple building is a form of God.

Temple is the embodiment of the
unified theory of energy and matter.

प्रासादादीनि वास्तूनि वस्तुत्वाद् वस्तु संश्रयात्।
तान्येव वस्तुरेवेति कथितं वै वस्तुविद् वुधैः ॥
"Prāsādādīni vāstūni vastutvād vastu samsrayāt
tānyeva vastu reveti kathitam vai vastu vid bhudhaihi".

உள்ளம் பெருங்கோயில் ஊனுடம்பு ஆலயம்
"Ullam perumkoil oonudambu ālayam".

ஒளியொலிப் பொருளாய் ஓங்கும் எழுத்தே
"Oli yolipporulāi ongum eluthe".

உயிர்மெய்ப் பொருளாய் சிவனுதல் இயல்பே
"Uyir meipporulāi sivanuthal eyalbey".

6-6

A VISION REPLICATED INTO MATERIAL FORM

Dr.V.Ganapati Sthapati.

Nandalala Sri Krishna Prayer Hall is a small but elegant building, consisting of a stone-built Garbhagriha, with a large hall on the front for congregation and a passage all around, for circum-ambulation. The main deity installed in the sanctum is Sri Krishna, in the aspect of Gopala. A small shrine is also erected outside the hall in the South-West corner (Niruti) for Sri Ganapati. Krishna and Ganapati face the East. There are two entrances to the temple, one from the east and another from the south. The south entrance has road aspect. This complex has come into being at 117, Dr.Renga Road, Mylapore, Chennai-4.

The temple of Sri Krishna is unique in two respects. One is, that the main sanctum is built of blue granite in Dwaraka style of architecture. This may be regarded as the first and best of its kind to be built of hard granite, in Tamilnadu, by South Indian shilpis. Readers must be aware of the intricate mouldings of which the exterior surface of the sanctum are decorated in North Indian temples, in view of the soft medium of sand stones they are built with. All details, attributable to the Dwaraka style, are possible only in sand stone, but the same have been rendered faithfully and tastefully, in hard granite in the Krishna temple.

There is another part of the temple building, called Vimana, which comes over the terrace of the sanctum. This has been built of sand stone of yellow variety by a popular Sthapati, who built the famous Sri Swami Narayan Temple in Akshardam as well as in United Kingdom. They are traditional in concept and replicate the details of Dwaraka temple of Sri Krishna in glorious terms. Similar Vimana has already been erected on the top of the Vinayaka temple, referred to above. The credit of having brought together two groups of traditional shilpis, one of Tamilnadu and another of Gujarat reminds us of the Silappathikaram days (2nd century A.D.) where there is a reference to the shilpis of Maharashtra having worked with the shilpis of Tamilnadu unitedly. Her Holiness Ammai Madiyoli Saraswati is responsible for the history to repeat itself in Tamilnadu. This was possible for the reason that the tradition of Vaastu has been pan Indian, in concept design and execution.

Another aspect of this temple worthy of note is that there is a basement floor, specially meant for discourses and meditation. The entry into the meditation hall is provided on the northern side, with a ramp for the children to walk down softly and congregate for meditation and prayer. There is another entry into the basement on the east, by a southern opening. The meditation hall is surcharged with spiritual vibrations by means of space modulation and introduction of conventional embellishments which would be, in addition, aesthetically pleasing to the head and heart.

Apart from the arrangement of various built-spaces, with respect to worship-methodology, there is one aspect which stands out supreme in that, the temple is mainly meant for children to come into contact with our hoary

spiritual culture through temple worship. They are to be initiated not only into the culture of temple worship but to perform poojas themselves.

In this context, one should remember that the whole scheme of the temple and its adjuncts has been the vision of Her Holiness Ammai Madiyoli Saraswati, which gets realized today. Her deep appreciation of the concept of the **temple structure, as a form of god,** was evident in that, she used to visit the temple site frequently inspect the jointing work and place mortar at each layer of architectural stones with prayer, right from the bottom till it reached the top. So devoted she was!

This aspect of the temple as a form of god is implied in the Upanishadaic statement of प्रासादं पुरुषं मत्वा पूजयेत् मन्त्रवित्तमः 'Prasadam purusham mathva poojayet mantra vittamaha'. The literal meaning is that the priest well versed in mantras shall look upon the temple building (prasada) as Purusha (embodied energy called Vaastu Purusha) and worship him with due respect. The meaning further noticeable in this context is that a temple building is a composite of the Sukshma (subtle) and Sthula (gross) aspects of the Supreme Being. The Sukshma is the subtle space enclosed in the sanctum and Sthula is the material form built around it.

The same concept is emphasised in another statement, where the temple structure is realized to be देह (body) and the space contained therein, the जीव (spirit) देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तो जीवो देवः सनातनः deho devalayah prokto jeevo devah sanatanaha. (देव means not only the idol but also the luminous akasa and hence सनातन eternal). In the same vein, there is another upanishad which states that आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेवच 'ātmānam rathinam viddhi sarīram rathamevacha', which means that the soul is the rider and the body is the chariot.

This is confirmed by Thirumanthiram of Thirumoolar in clear terms when it says that "உள்ளம் பெருங்கோயில் ஊனுடம்பு ஆலயம்" "ullam perumkoil oonudambu alayam" where **ullam,** the conscious inner space is **perumkoil** and the rhythm bound spatial form or the expansion around the **perumkoil,** is the **alayam.** This interpretation is deeply scientific in that, the term **'alaya'** literally means **'laya pradhana space'** or **'rhythm bound space'.** In other words, the temple layout is the extended form of the **'rhythm'** of the inner space (the atman). This is the subtle difference implied in the terms **'perumkoil'** and **'alayam'.** Therefore in the Vaastu tradition, the temple complex is designed according to what is called musical layam (or **swara vinyasa**). Hence architecture is defined as frozen music as well.

In all these discussions one would find statements based on personal experiences only which would not help a designer or builder to replicate into visual form as exists in nature. This is because they lack measures and organic parts (angas) for the designer to compose and give material form to the experience or truth.

In the traditional Vaastu Shastras, the concept of temple structure as the extended material form of the **jeeva** is vividly described in a technological language, to aid designing of temple forms meaningfully. The temple form is designed into Viswaroopa (visible material universe). Is not the human body, an extended form of the inner being, the subtle into gross?

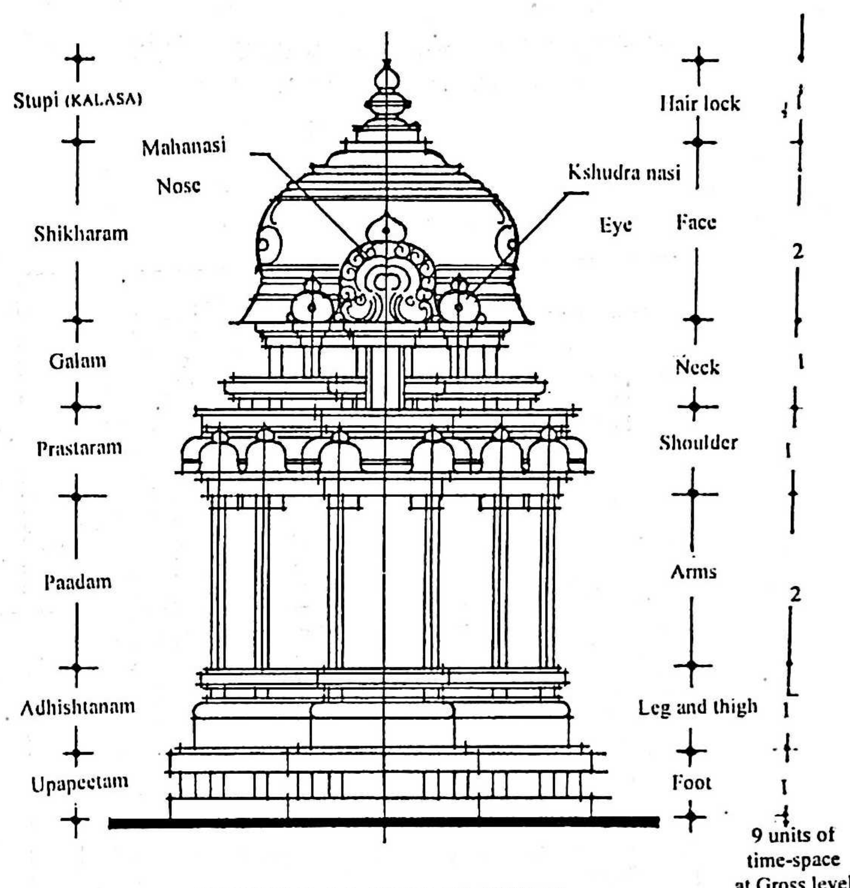
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The Vaastu sloka runs thus:

**उपपीठं चरणाकारं अधिष्टानं जानुमण्डलं, पादवर्गं कराकारं प्रस्तरं बाहुमूलकम् , तत्कण्ठं गलमित्युक्तं शिखरं मुखमेवच,
उष्णीषान्तं शिखाचैव महानासीच नासिका, नेत्राणां क्षुद्रनास्यौच विश्वरूपमिति स्मृतम् ॥**

Upapeetam charanākāram adhistānam jānu mandalam, Pāda vargam karākāram prastaram bāhu mūlakam. Tatkantam gala mithyuktam shikharam mukha mevache, Ushneeshāntam shikhā chaiva mahānāsicha nāsika, Netranām kshudra nāsyau cha viswarupa mithi smirutam.

There are a certain number of parts or limbs of which the temple structure is composed, just like the human form being composed of limbs such as foot, leg, thigh, torso, hand, neck, head and the hairlock. The components of the temple form, as expressed in physical terms, may be noticed in the accompanying diagram. The human scale (taala unit/kaala maatra) is indicated along side. The subtle is 8 units and the gross, 9 units. The structure is a Mayonic creation wherein human laya (order) is brought into application.

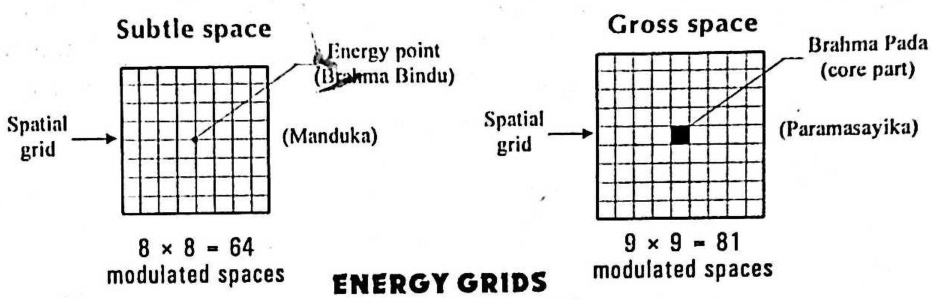


TEMPLE AS HUMAN FORM

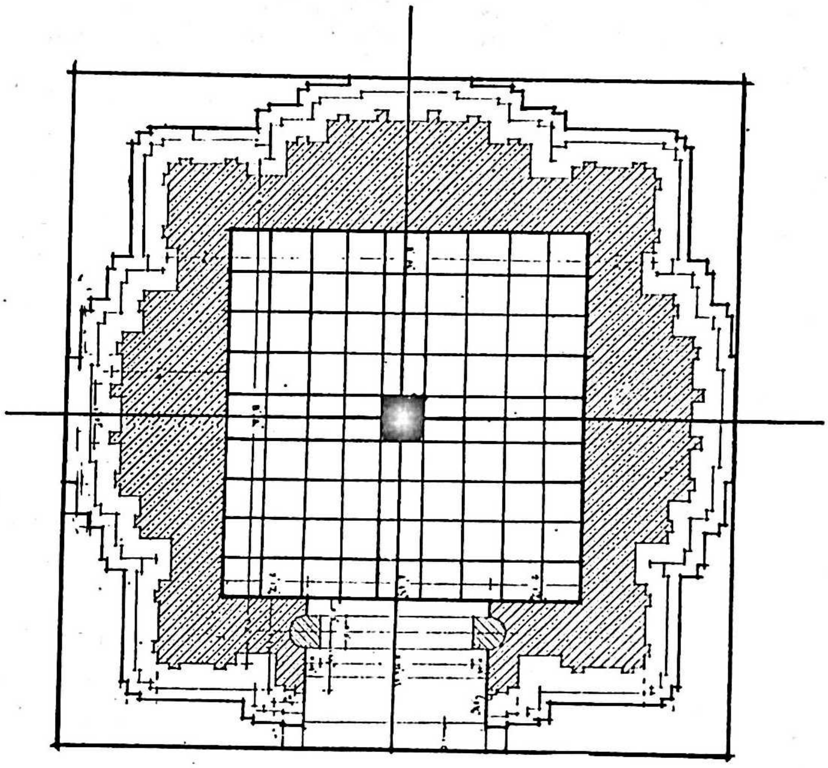
PRĀSĀDA PURUSHA

Human scale : head 1, torso 3, thigh 2, leg 2 + (foot ¼ + knee ¼ + neck ¼ + skull ¼) = 9 units. This is the measure of the basic form, though there are many extrapolated forms based on the fundamental concept of taala-measure (Vide details of taala units as based on units of time-space and discussed elsewhere).

There is one profound scientific concept underlying the creation of Vaastu structures whether it is a temple building or a house building. Let us presently focus our attention on the temple structure. To understand the composition of structural parts of a temple, one should know something about the layout and its significance. It is the layout that determines the form. The layout adopted for temple form is said to be the layout of the Cosmos! This is the basic concept which confers pan-indianness to the temple design and lends national character to the temple-culture.



ENERGY GRIDS
Vaastu Purusha Mandala



LAYOUT OF KRISHNA TEMPLE

Vaastu Purusha Mandala
as Temple layout

The plan of the layout of a temple or a residential building (vide drawings above) is technically called Mandala or Pada vinyasa with a grid of 8 × 8 = 64 spaces or 9 × 9 = 81 spaces of equal dimensions. In modern English this is called energy-grid. These layouts are squares, two dimensionally and cubes, tri-dimensionally. Those two layouts are the geometrical formulae for the shilpi to replicate the subtle substance of the universe into visual material form. This is the formula handled by God Viswakarma, the creator of the universe, to turn his own thoughts into material forms. This formula is couched in a simplistic saying वस्तुरेव वास्तु (vastu reva vaastu) meaning "it is the subtle that turns into gross". Here Vastu is subtle energy and Vaastu is embodied energy. This was discovered and put into the Vaastu texts by a very great scientist of Indian origin, by name Mayan, the author of Mayamata Vastu shastra and of Surya Siddhanta, the most ancient treatise on Astronomy. On account of this supreme discovery, Veda Vyasa has christened him as VISHWAKARMA. The application of this principle confers vibrant sanctity on the man-made structure of a temple and makes it worship worthy. This is the scientific truth of the highest order underlying temple design and temple culture.

To understand this concept still more clearly, one has to go to the root of the genesis and evolution of the universe. The root exists in the vast luminous space (akasa / ஒளிவெளி) that surrounds the earth and every object of the universe. The space under reference is not a space of nothingness but a space filled with energy or spiritual light. As a matter of fact, the space is mathematically confirmed to have been packed with countless cubes of energy of Paramanu size. One such cubical space (दहराकाश daharakasa) dwells in the cave of our heart and in the hearts of all animate objects of the universe. This cube with a square base is called Vaastu Purusha Mandala where 'mandala' is square and 'purusha' is energy. वास्तुपुरुषः चतुरश्र समस्थः 'Vaastu purushah chaturasra samsthaha'-"the all pervasive energy is couched in a square" - so says Vaastu Vidya, a treatise on architecture. Vaastu Purusha mandala represents, infact, the micro universe and quality wise and shape wise the micros and the macro are one and the same. This is signified in the Vedic statement of अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् 'anoraniyan mahato mahiyan'. That "the qualities of the 'anu' and 'anda' are one and the same" - is the meaning implied. This is because that both of them have originated from the luminous space. ''அண்ட மூலமாய் பிண்ட மூலமாய் கொண்டிலங்குஒளி வெளியென'' 'anda moolamai pinda moolamai kondilangu veli oliyena' - so says Mayan also. Anu is part and parcel of Brahmanda. Anus are countless and Anda is one.

That the space is the primary source of all animate beings is justified further in the upanishadaic saying, आकाशात् वायु: वायोरग्निः अग्नेरापः अद्भिः पृथ्वी पृथ्वीभ्यां ओषधयः।। 'akasat vayuhu vayoragnihi agnerapaha adbhi prithvi prithivee bhyam oshadhayaha'. The meaning is that the air, fire, water and earth have come forth in successive developments from the SPACE. The vegetation, further

came out of the Earth, which acted as another space (source) called earthly space. The shorter version of this phenomenon is that the Earth came out of the Space or the Space is the source of the Earth. Infact, it is from one single paramanu that the Earth has come into being and hence the energy contained in an 'anu-sized subtle energy' and the energy contained in the Earth itself have come to be called by a common term Vaastu Purusha and hence the container and the content have together come to be called Vaastu Purusha Mandala. The layout of the spherical earth is identified to be Vaastu Purusha Mandala of $9 \times 9 = 81$ spaces whereas at subtle level, it was of $8 \times 8 = 64$ spaces of energy grid. Hence the mandala of 8×8 and that of 9×9 are said to be 'subtle' and 'gross' respectively. Area wise, the square and circle are equal, inspite of its growth from anu to anda (in terms of proportions). This theory is applied to all animate beings from insect to elephant. **The square Vaastu Purusha Mandala is the wave pattern of primordial energy and infact it is the primal manifest form of the non-manifest,** which grows into material form ultimately. All visual and audible forms come under this theory. The resultant mathematical formula is that □ = O, meaning that the subtle is qualitatively and quantitatively equal to gross. This is signified in the Vaastu sutra वस्तुरेव वास्तु 'Vastureva Vaastu'. This is the science of the highest order, which is the ruling element of Vaastu grammar. This is where the 'matter' and 'energy' exist unified in nature. This is expressed unambiguously by Mayan himself in Mayamatam which is named as 'Vastu shastra', not 'Vaaṣtu shastra', thereby meaning that Maya's science is the science of the universal substance, the ENERGY and MATTER. He says, प्रासादादीनि वास्तूनि वस्तुत्वाद् वस्तु संश्रयात् । तान्येव वस्तुरेवेति कथितं वै वस्तुविद् बुधैः ॥ "Praasaadadini vaastuni vastuvaad vastu samsrayat taanyeva vastu reveti kathitam vai vastu vid bhudhaihi". The meaning in simple words is that buildings, be it a temple or a house, are all embodied energies, signifying the co-existence of energy and matter (Vastu and Vaastu). Is this not the unified theory of energy and matter? The same unified theory of energy and matter is expressed in the concept of a 'letter' as a composite of உயிர் (Uyir) and மெய் (Mei), where உயிர் is energy and மெய் is matter. In English உயிர் is vowel and மெய் is consonant. According to Mayan, the SPACE 'akasa' is the 'unified field' as it is the source of energy and matter. This is the cream of Mayonic science of Vastu and Vaastu.

So Vaastu Purusha Mandala, the plan of the primordial cube of energy is utilized as the plan of the temple, as per the directive of Vaastu shastra. How sacred and scientific is the principle governing temple form? Is this not secular and universal? The three dimensional cube is the basic structure of the sanctum into which is placed the idol for worship. Around the cube, a variety of bands and motifs are added on to give a pleasing look and to conform to human form in structural terms. This cube is traditionally denoted by the epithets சிற்றவை (Chitravai), சிற்றம்பலம் (Chitrambalam) and சிதம்பரம் (Chidambaram) which means 'mini hall'. This I have named as 'Micro-abode'

and 'Microbode'. So every temple structure, as per Vaastu tradition, is a microbode, within which the free space is enclosed. What does this microbode, the mini hall contain? It is a spark of cosmic fire that lies centred. This is called Brahma bindu or ஒளி அணு Oli anu. This is again OM light, the vibration of which causes into existence the Om sound. The vibration of this Om light is called Time i.e. காலம் Kaalam. The vibration of the primal OM light is the dance of Lord Shiva (காலன்) and that of sound is Uma (காளி). Hence 'Omkara' Natana. Uma is 'word' (vaak) and Shiva is 'meaning' (artha). So Mayan says that Kaalam is the creative element of all the objects of the universe and adds that the universe itself is the product of Time. "காலமே எவற்றுக்கும் மூலம். காலமே கோலத் தோற்றம். காலமே ஞாலத் தோற்றம். காலமே விந்தை செய்யும்". (மயன்) "Time is the creative source of all objects. It is time that changes into form. It is time that blossoms into the universe and kaalam thus does wonders". (Mayan). Therefore Kaalam itself is designated as Kaala Brahman. Kaalam, in simple words is the speed or vibration of energy or light. Noticing this phenomenon, one minor upanishad remarks, कालोहि ब्रह्ममिति केचित् वदन्ति. The meaning is that some are of the opinion that Time itself, is the Brahmaṇ.

Skaanda purana is supportive of Mayan's discovery in the following words कालः सृजति भूतानि। कालः सम्हरति प्रजाः। सर्वे कालस्य वशगाः। कालो तस्य वशे स्थितः।। Time causes into existence all objects of nature. All that it created gets destroyed by Time. Everything rests in the hand of Time. That Time rests indeed in the hand of Skanda. 'உண்மை விளக்கம்' 'unmai vilakkam' a small saivite treatise states that 'all appearances emanate from vibrations' 'தோற்றம் துடியதனில்' 'tottram tudiyathanil'. The summum-bonum of these discussions is that vibration causes all phenomena. This concept is extended to poetry, music and dance where Kaala is redesignated as Taala (தாளம்) (maatra kaalam), the ruling element of all forms of poetry, music and also dance. What would be unique and astonishing is that the same Taala measure is extended to create visual material forms (time-spaces) of which one is the building whether of temple or house. Sculptural representations are also born of this scientific theory of rhythm (Taala) and therefore they are divine and worship worthy.

The concept of Vastu, in this context, is that it is the minute cell of energy (microbode) which changes itself into material body (vaastu) by virtue of the vibrations emanating from the energy. In other words, all living organisms have sprung into material existence out of the seed and speed of divine energy. Hence the sanctum, is held to be a living organism capable of 'vibrating from within and spreading into a space of energetic particles'. These vibrations have been quantified just as we have quantified the sound vibrations emanating from a stringed instrument of music. These measures of sound vibrations have been assessed to be equal to material vibrations and thus got extended to create material spaces called buildings.

Another important concept of Vaastu is that this small cell of energy is called 'foetus of space (விண்கரு Vinkaru)' or 'garbha (गर्भ)' by which the structure has come to be called Garbhagriha (கர்பக்கிருஹம்) and Karuvarai (கருவறை). Also called Bindu Griha (பிந்துக்கிருஹம்) in Agamas. 'Karu' கரு is the energetic space-atom and the structure enclosing it is 'Arai' அறை. Our Garbhagriha structure is so designed in terms of frequency of vibrations called 'rhythm' that the energy-waves emanatng therefrom, are productive of positive effects on human psyche, in as much as musical vibrations are controlled by numerical adjustments to produce sweet sonic effect on human mind. Because of such structural vitality one feels edified when one steps into the temple ambience or stands in front of the sanctum. This will happen irrespective of the structure enshrining an idol or not. Such is the spiritual significance of the very structure of Garbhagriha.

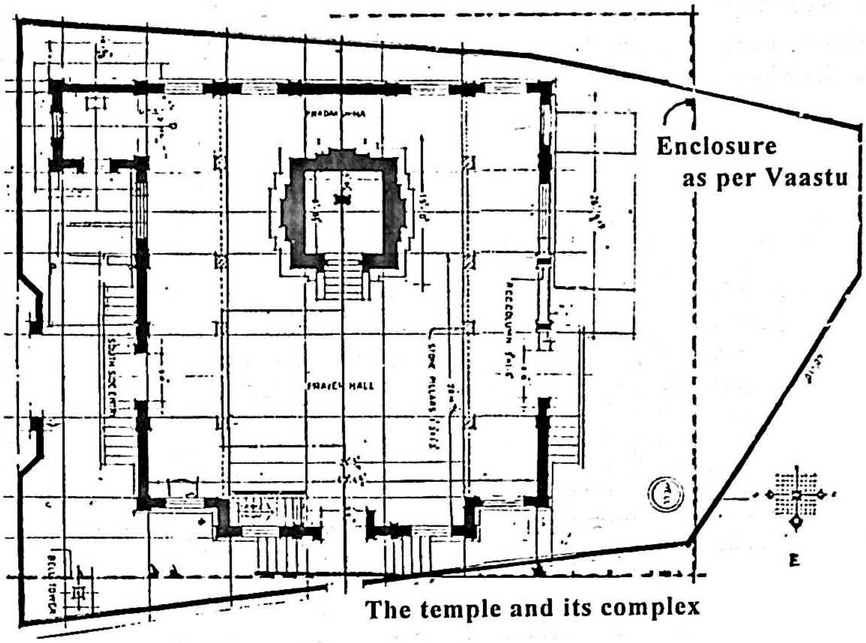
Before closing the discussion on the sacredness and scientific basis of temple architecture (applicable to building architecture as well), I have to add one more point of profound significance which has been the element of attraction and the secret behind the benefits being derived and enjoyed by the temple-goers.

We have seen already that the space is the source of all objects of nature. Since a particle of the free space is enclosed in our material body, we call ourselves living organisms (உயிர்ப் பொருள்கள்). If that particular element of energy escapes from out of our body, we become dead. So anything enclosing that kind of space can be treated as a form with life (பிராணி). This is how the formless space takes form also in the material world.

Now, extending this theory of space turning into form (when gets enclosed), to the building architecture, the Vaastu has another point of profound significance for all of us to hear and enjoy.

If a part of the vast space is isolated and bounded by a four walled structure called building (the building) becomes a living organism and starts pulsating from within, like a human being. It emits energy-waves, the impact of which, changes the behaviour of living beings including man. The impact may cause positive or negative effects on human psyche, depending upon the choice of measures adopted in the design. To change the negative effects, the Vaastu shastra has brought forth a formula by which a **harmony between the human vibrations** (measured numerically) **and that of the vibrations emanating from the building** (measured numerically) **is established.** This kind of harmony, brought out by mathematical calculations, leads one to enjoy physical welfare, spiritual wellbeing and further leads on to the realm of peace and bliss. Hence in the design of buildings, be it a temple or house, choice of measures and proportions plays a key role in the traditional architecture. Arbitrary measures, if adopted

consciously or unconsciously, in a building design, would be harmful and turn the building sick. The interior spaces of a building also call for an order without which no benefit of peace and bliss would be available. This order exists in nature, in the primal design of Vaastu Purusha mandala, which I have discussed as the very plan of the sanctum and the surrounding spaces constituting the temple complex called **'aalaya'**.



The temple and its complex

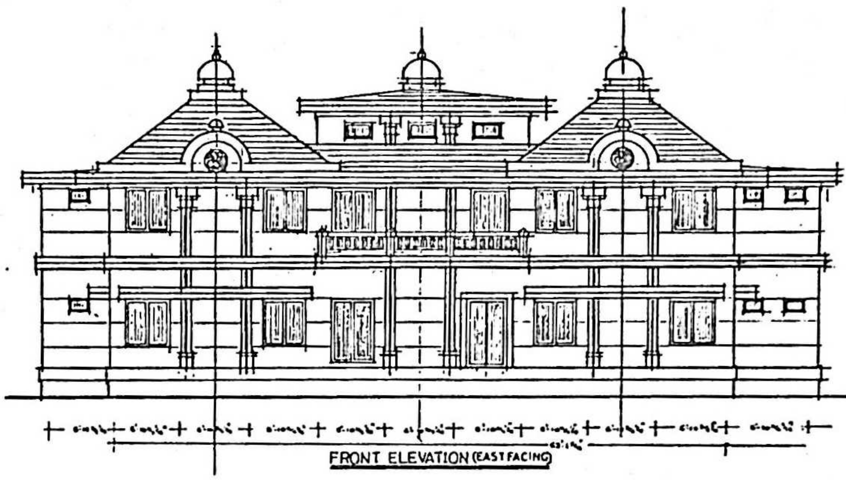
Look at the plan of Sri Krishna temple, with the space enclosed in the Garbhagriha, taken as the primal unit (of time-space) and expanded all over the complex to create uniform musical ambience or ambience of spiritual light. The whole temple-space is made to vibrate with spirituality. If one could produce sound out of the cube of the inner cell and allow it to come out into the complex and fill the space around, don't you feel that the whole space would reverberate in harmony with the sound of the inner cell? So every minute particle (paramanu) of the temple space would resonate with each other producing **'gamaka'** of the musical field. If the effect is 'sunaada' you experience the 'SPIRIT' in full measure. This is **'Atmanubhava'** or **'Paramananda'**, the supreme bliss.

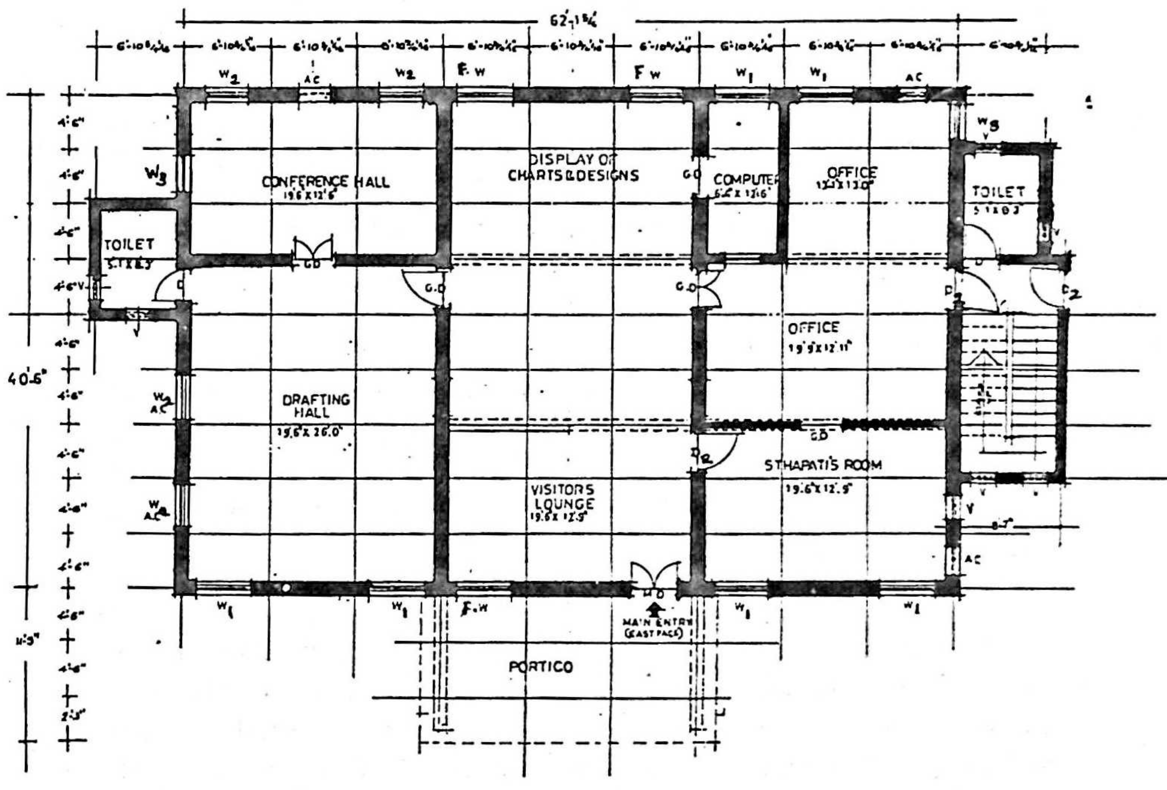
Seeking the blessings of Her Holiness Ammai Madiyoli Saraswati for one and all and for the team of Shilpis, I thank Her for giving such an opportunity to speak out the heart of Vaastu science and technology and serve Her with all our consciousness and regards. Finally, I invoke the blessings of Brahmarishi Mayan, the progenitor of the spiritual tradition of art and architecture for the wellbeing of the human race.

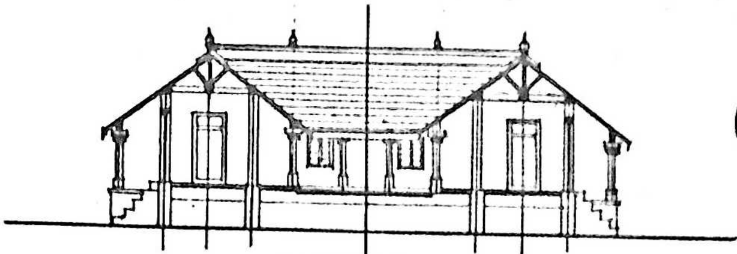
Extension to building architecture

It must be clear from the foregoing discussions, that the Cosmic design of the Vaastu Purusha Mandala is the basic plan of the building and the related heights, minor measures , aesthetical elements and embellishing features are expressed in terms of the modulated spaces. The basic plan is square but by way of expansion of the concept, the square is extended into rectangle which is recommended in the Vaastu shastras, the longer side being expanded in proportion to the width i.e., of 1, $1^{1}/8$th, $1^{2}/8$th, $1^{3}/8$th, $1^{4}/8$th ... upto 2 times the width. In short the principle is that the longer side has to have a definite proportion with the width, not arbitrary. It is the width, that should be modulated either into 8 or 9 spaces and expanded so as to fit in with the space created. This may be seen in the traditional pattern of house designed and shown below, which is going to be an office-cum-residence, in Chennai.

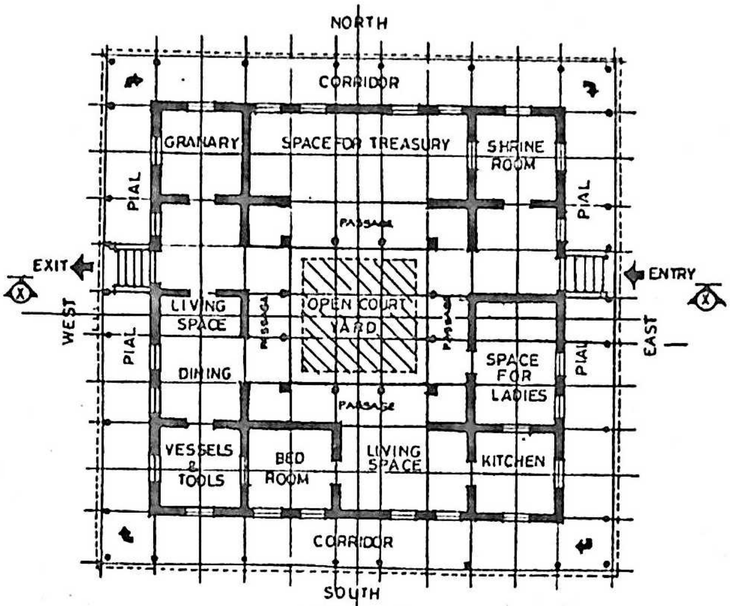
This building is designed to house an International Institute of Vaastu Sciences and Technologies with provision for research and teaching facilities. It is pow under construction.







SECTIONAL ELEVATION X-X



GROUND PLAN

TYPICAL LAYOUT FOR RESIDENTIAL SPACE

We have discussed about the ' ***Cubical anu'*** as the miniature Universe or microbode where the ' ***Cosmic Being'*** exists in vibrant stillness and which goes into action, as and when it feels, metamorphosing itself into material forms of its own thoughts. All forms of nature from insect to elephant, including man, have had their abode in this micro-abode before they came out into the world of reality and into which they get back and rest in peace ultimately. This is not speculative or imaginative but scientific, based on the Indian concept of ' unified theory of Energy and Matter' , and on the theory of 'unified-field' , ***the akasa.***

The Vaastu Shastras of Mayonic origin has incorporated this theory of Energy and Matter (Vastu and Vaastu) in the basic design of the cosmos, which we call residential space or house, in the material world.

The design above represents the primal pattern of the cosmos where its energies are spread all over the enclosed space, producing negative and positive effects on human psyche. Since the energy is contained in the abode, this becomes an embodiment of multi-qualities - favourable and unfavourabe, negative and positive to which all animate beings are subjected. How one has to live in harmony with this subtle nature, over and above living in harmony with gross nature is the problem solved by the Vaastu Shastras to the best advantage of the human race.

This theory of □ being the ***unified field***, technically called Vaastu Purusha Mandala, is the primal manifest form of the unmanifest. The design of the house is patterned after this and hence typical.